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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ATHENS 001597

SIPDIS

AMEMBASSY ANKARA PASS TO AMCONSUL ADANA
AMEMBASSY ASTANA PASS TO USOFFICE ALMATY
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL LEIPZIG
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PASS TO AMEMBASSY PODGORICA
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI PASS TO AMCONSUL ST PETERSBURG
AMEMBASSY ATHENS PASS TO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL YEKATERINBURG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/11/04

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHSA](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [EWWT](#) [GR](#)

SUBJECT: NEW GOVERNMENT WANTS TO DEEPEN U.S.-GREECE STRATEGIC
RELATIONS, ALTERNATE MOD TELLS A/S SHAPIRO

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CLASSIFIED BY: Daniel V. Speckhard, Ambassador; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In a cordial October 22 meeting with Alternate Minister of Defense Panos Beglitis, A/S Shapiro urged Greece to deepen its partnership with the U.S. on counterpiracy, sign the New York Declaration on Best Practices, follow through on its commitment to move its ISAF engineering battalion to western Afghanistan and deploy an OMLT, praised the new Papandreou government for its commitment to transparency in arms procurement, and asked how budgetary pressures might affect the Greek armed forces. Alternate MOD Beglitis highlighted the close, historic ties between the U.S. and Greece, stressed the intent of the new government to deepen its strategic relationship with the U.S., asked for the Administration's views and expectations on Afghanistan, stated that his government wanted a "new period of relations with Turkey," and supported Turkish EU accession, though "not with a blank check." END SUMMARY.

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Counterpiracy: A Prime Area for Deeper Cooperation

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¶2. (C) Alt/MOD Beglitis led off his remarks by stating the intent of the new Papandreou government to deepen the strategic relationship between Greece and the United States, especially in defense, and stressed that Greece views itself as a partner of the U.S. in defense of democracy and the common values of the North Atlantic Alliance. A/S Shapiro agreed that our political-military relationship was rich and deep, and told Beglitis that we wanted to see our partnership continue to develop. One such area that was ripe for further cooperation was counterpiracy, Shapiro stated, a global challenge. A/S Shapiro urged the Greek government to join the U.S. and other powerful maritime nations in signing the New York Declaration on best practices for merchant vessel self-protection at the next plenary meeting of the Contact Group on

Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS), and commended the Greeks for their frigate contributions to both NATO's Operation Ocean Shield, and the EU's Atalanta missions off of Somalia.

Afghanistan: Greeks Non-Committal, Focused on Next U.S. Steps

¶3. (C) A/S Shapiro thanked Beglitis for the Greek commitment to lift its caveat and move its engineering battalion out of Kabul to Herat, and to deploy an Operational Mentoring Liaison Team in the Kabul area. He urged quick delivery on this commitment, and pledged to maintain a dialogue on possible Greek equipment needs. (Comment: The deployment timeline continues to slip backwards, and is now slated for March 2010, should newly identified force protection requirements be procured in time. The Greek military recently asked the U.S. to help it procure, at reduced cost, leasing, or grant, 32 MRAP-type vehicles, 52 IED electronic countermeasure devices, 4 armored bulldozers, and more to enable these deployments. End comment.)

¶4. (C) Alt/MOD Beglitis told Shapiro that the Greek government
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would soon be reviewing its involvement in Afghanistan, and that of NATO. He peppered the Assistant Secretary with questions on the Administration's views toward the situation in Afghanistan and President Karzai, and the sort of end state envisioned by the U.S. there. He was keen on the future of NATO in Afghanistan, how to create political stability following the recent elections, and the need, he asserted, to develop relations with "moderate" Taliban. A/S Shapiro assured Beglitis that Washington is working hard on its ongoing review, and stressed that the question policymakers are examining is not whether to stay or to go but whether our effort is adequately resourced, and whether the balance between our civilian and military efforts is calibrated in the best manner possible. We are not diminishing our role, he reiterated, and stressed the importance of our partners delivering on their commitments in Afghanistan.

¶5. (C) Ambassador Speckhard encouraged Alt/MOD Beglitis to take a hard look at ramping up Greek contributions to training efforts in Afghanistan, noting the link between Greece's problems with illegal immigration, and the direct link success in Afghanistan and Pakistan will have on alleviating a portion of the illegal immigration flood into Greece each year. "You can either spend some money there, or more money here," the Ambassador stated. Beglitis "shared totally" that view, highlighting that of the 150,000 illegal immigrants that land in Greek territory each year, 46,000 have Afghan origins. Beglitis agreed this was a pressing national security problem for Greece.

Turkey: Strong Support, but No Blank Check for EU Accession

16. (C) Prompted by A/S Shapiro to share his thoughts on threats to Greece's national security, Beglitis noted twenty-first century threats such as immigration and the environment, then turned to Turkey. A/S Shapiro welcomed PM Papandreou's October 9 trip to Istanbul, and the positive statements that followed. Beglitis gave a nod to long-standing difficulties with Turkey, but stated that the PM believed deeply in taking a new road with Turkey, and that his Istanbul trip was "more than symbolic," signaling a "new period of relations with Turkey." He acknowledged that the government did not benefit in public opinion polls from this policy, but reiterated that the Greek government wants a Turkey anchored in the EU, with a European perspective, though it is not willing to provide a "blank check." There are conditions, Beglitis stated; Turkey must take the correct steps vis-a-vis the Greek-Turkish bilateral relationship, as well as the Cyprus problem.

17. (C) Ambassador Speckhard urged Beglitis to respond positively to the recent cessation of Turkish overflights over Agathonisi and Farmakonisi, recommending a gesture to send a signal that the Turkish action was noted. Stop your radar from tagging unannounced Turkish military flights in the Aegean as hostile, he recommended, pointing back to May and June of this year when the government had previously considered this, and noting that NATO has asked the same. Beglitis balked, but Ambassador Speckhard pressed, assuring him that we would work in Ankara to encourage more from Turkey.

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Procurement: Government Seeks More Transparency

18. (C) A/S Shapiro asked Beglitis of his plans for how to balance Greece's military procurement needs with the country's dire fiscal and budgetary situation, and how the Greek government plans to bring more transparency to the procurement process, as both the PM and MOD Venizelos have announced. A/S Shapiro commended Greek intentions to improve and rationalize their procurement processes. He stressed that American equipment was cost-effective, and would prove to be the best value in a transparent process. Beglitis acknowledged that Greece was "in a major economic crisis" at present, but asserted that this would not affect the Greek military's readiness, or its ability to acquire weapons systems it deemed necessary. He stated that expenditures must indeed be cut, and pointed to plans to rationalize expenses, and implement Parliamentary oversight over the procurement process to ensure that money is not wasted. (Comment: Such oversight would be a major step forward in rationalizing the Greek procurement process, and bringing into the light some of its more shadowy, politicized elements. The government plans to charge the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee to set and validate acquisitions and contracting obligations. If implemented, that would give the Parliament a meaningful role in the process, which it has heretofore lacked. End comment.)

19. (U) This cable has been cleared by A/S Shapiro.
Speckhard